

# Life of the Spirit

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## FOR RELIGIOUS SISTERS

BY

THE EDITOR

FROM the first number of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, some two and a half years ago, we have had the spiritual needs of the laity primarily in view. It was felt that among the laity only the picked few could attend regular retreats or receive a constant guidance or direction. Religious are necessarily more plentifully supplied with such help, and therefore a review concerned with prayer and the spiritual life should deal first with the needs and problems of the good Christian living a more or less isolated life in the world.

But we had never intended that this should be the exclusive field of the *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*; we had intended to devote a special section to the vows and the state of perfection, a section which would be of some assistance to those who might try their vocation in a religious Order or who had already found their home therein. This secondary aim has not been so far attainable at least regularly; but a recent visit of the Editor's to a Parisian Conference has revealed some clearer possibilities in this line. The Conference was held by a group of clergy under the auspices of *La Vie Spirituelle* for the assistance of religious sisters in France; and it has suggested a possible service of a similar nature which this review could render in England. We will therefore briefly sketch in the background of this Conference.

The modern problems of religious sisters are not always realised; but at least it is generally recognised that many Orders and Congregations find it difficult to recruit subjects for the future continuance, quite apart from the expansion, of their Communities. This problem has become a veritable '*crise*' in France. There are as many young women as ever, and as generous, but few of them find themselves drawn to religious life as it is presented in their experience. This is the central problem of 'recruitment'. But for long in this country as well as in France it has been a habit to take the heroic lives of these women for granted. They are often criticised, but they are always expected to fill every gap in parish life, in education, in

nursing. If they are not ready to undertake further commitments they are regarded as being lacking in devotion. All the time they are carrying on a life which is often truly heroic in its activity and unrequited zeal. So intensely indeed have these sisters been asked to work for the Church that the modern young women sees quite often exhausted sisters, with drawn features and tired eyes, unable to attend with much profit to the life of prayer which still continues inexorably within the convent walls. Little wonder, thought the Editors of *La Vie Spirituelle* and several clear-sighted clergy with them, little wonder that few present themselves as postulants—a vicious circle: the fewer the subjects the more intense the work, and the less attractive to those in the world.

It was first suggested early in 1945 that the chaplains of various religious orders of women should meet to discuss these problems and to seek a way of helping these women whose spiritual needs they were supplying. But it was clear that the chaplains had only a 'sacramental' function in respect of the nuns; it was decided that those who were in some way responsible in a wider sense would be the most able to assist in this crisis. Therefore, a group of religious men—Jesuit, Benedictine, Carmelite, Dominican, as well as many other religious and secular priests—who were in a position to help these religious effectively, gathered by invitation of *La Vie Spirituelle*. The Director General of Religious in Paris was approached and followed the work with interest. The group naturally exercised no authority in these matters; that is the property of the Holy See and Hierarchy. This was rather in the nature of theologians whose experience, discussions and contact with the immediate problems are able to assist this authority. For indeed it is the whole body of the clergy who should now be willing to come forward to offer whatever assistance lies in their power, after so much assistance rendered to them by these good religious.

These clergy met in May 1946 for *Journées d'Etudes* lasting two days, during which they discussed the main problems which faced the religious sisters and some remedies proposed in the nature of the formation of the subjects and the government of the Orders and Congregations. It was generally felt that modern life together with the great development of the realisation of the Mystical Body in the Church demanded a certain re-orientation and new emphasis in training among these religious. The group met again in January 1947 and their discussions were so successful that they were able to publish a large volume, *Directoire Des Supérieures*, with a Preface by Cardinal Suhard, which sold out in the first month or two of its appearance. This fact alone showed that their activities were fully



appreciated by the Sisters themselves. The volume is addressed to Superiors of religious Congregations and deals with such subjects as the state of perfection, the vows, the office of the Superior in relation to the sanctification of her subjects and of the common good, the actual mentality of the modern young woman, how to discern vocations, and the formation of novices, etc. The authors comprise members of the secular clergy and various religious orders, and their work extends over 320 closely packed pages. The Cardinal introduces it with these words to the Editor of the volume:

Moved by the immediate crisis in recruiting through which our Communities are now passing, you and your collaborators, both regular and secular, were compelled to uncover its causes and to suggest remedies for it. Your work, the fruit of long reflection, grounded on prayer, and inspired not by a desire for reform but with the ambition of bringing out the value of the high dignity of these consecrated souls, now comes into the light of day.

Without such encouragement it is not likely that this body of clergy could have achieved anything. But soon an impressive meeting of the superiors of nursing sisters were able to gather the first fruits of this work. In the following pages we have the privilege of publishing a translation of one of the addresses which were given to their assembly. It shows the temper of the work which these French priests have undertaken. The superiors on their part were enthusiastic over the meeting, for the opportunity both of listening to the words of the theologians and also of discussing with each other their difficulties, so fundamentally the same throughout, and this shows the temper of the religious sisters themselves. It has been a great work of charity.

In 1948 two conferences were called. The first met in January and its deliberations have also been published in a '*Supplément de la Vie Spirituelle*' under the title of *Adaptations de la Vie Religieuse* which indicates the nature of the papers and discussions. The second, at which the Editor of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT was privileged to be present, considered the fundamental doctrine of consecrated virginity within the Life of the Church. There is no need to detail this meeting for it is likely that its deliberations will also be published in the near future. And so the work goes on with enthusiasm and general co-operation in France.

The question naturally presents itself as to whether something of the same sort of help could not be offered to the sisters of the English-speaking world. The crisis may not be so acute, but many of the problems may in fact already exist in English Orders and Congregations. An exchange of views on the subject would at least be constructive. The Editor of the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT would there-

fore be happy to know how many religious sisters would be interested in an English version, adapted to the needs of English-speaking religious, of the *Directoire des Supérieures* and *Adaptations*. At present it is proposed to reduce these two books to a single moderate English volume, comprising the main features without the French particularities. But it would be of considerable assistance to the Editor to learn to what extent such a volume would be useful to English Sisters, and he invites them to send their views to him.<sup>1</sup>

THE EDITOR.

1 To assist the reader to judge of the possible utility of these two volumes, we here append a list of their contents:

DIRECTOIRE: I *Théologie de la Vie Religieuse*

- 1 La perfection chrétienne dans l'état religieux—  
M.-J. Nicholas, O.P.
- 2 Les Voeux: Pauvreté—Stephane Piat, O.F.M.
- 3 Chasteté—Dom Massabki, O.S.B.
- 4 Obéissance—M.-J. Nicholas, O.P.
- 5 Les Observances, l'oraison, et la vie liturgique—  
Dom Basset, O.S.B.

II *Théorie du Supérieurat*

- 1 La Supérieure et la sanctification de ses religieuses—  
Paul Marie de la Croix, O.C.D.
- 2 La Supérieure servante du bien commun—Abbé Kothén.

III *Ce que la Supérieure doit savoir*

- 1 Foi et théologie—A. Henry, O.P.
- 2 Notions de psychologie—Abbé Géraud.
- 3 Notions de droit canon—P. Delchard, S.J.
- 4 Reflexions sur la mentalité actuelle de la jeune fille chrétienne—  
P. Carré, O.P.

IV *La Pratique du Gouvernement*

- 1 Pratique du Gouvernement—P. Bergh, S.J.
- 2 Rapports des supérieures avec les mouvements d'action catholique,  
les oeuvres et la paroisse—Canon Dermine.

V *Recrutement et formation des sujets*

- 1 Discernement des Vocations—P. Loret, C.SS.R.

ADAPTATIONS: Le Principe des Adaptations—R. P. Victor de la Vierge, O.C.D.

- Les adaptations de la Pauvreté—S. E. Mgr. Ancel.  
de l'Obéissance—R. Omez, O.P.  
de la vie commune—Dom Basset, O.S.B.

Témoignages d'une Congregation ancienne, d'une Congregation nouvelle, de communautés laïques.



# SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITIES<sup>1</sup>

BY

A. PLE, O.P.

(*Director of 'La Vie Spirituelle'*).



HAVE been asked to speak to you about your spiritual responsibilities. Better than anyone you know the weight of them, and very specially at a time when the religious life is suffering from some disrepute, from reproaches, attacks, even from a recruiting crisis. The misunderstandings, the calumnies even, which circulate among people of the world, whether practising or not, are hardly worth considering. On the other hand, what does deserve attention is the opinion of those Christians, priests or layfolk, who seem to be the active elements of what His Eminence Cardinal Suhard calls 'the springtime of the Church'.

Increasingly nowadays priests, and holy priests of good judgment and experience, hesitate to recommend the religious life to their penitents. On their side, many young girls, apparently called to evangelical perfection, seek something other than the religious state, in so far at least as they are able to know it.

What is the reason for this?

One of these young girls told me it very clearly. A recent convert, she came to see me to confide in me that, reading in the Gospel the words of our Lord: 'Come, follow me', she had understood that the invitation was addressed to herself. 'But', she told me with vehemence, 'I don't want to be a nun!'

'And why not?' Listen to the reply: 'It is too far from the Gospel!' Too far from the Gospel! A state of life sanctioned by the Church to make the practice of the evangelical counsels as easy as possible!

When souls both generous and in good faith make such paradoxical, such scandalous criticisms, it is our duty to pull ourselves up for a moment in order to try to understand. Do not believe that I have come here to join in the chorus who run down the religious life. I believe in it, on the contrary, with all the faith that is in me;

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<sup>1</sup> The substance of an address to a Conference of Religious Superiors held in Paris in June, 1947. The address is published (with the others delivered at that *Journée d'études des congregations hospitalières*) at *Secrétariat Catholique des Oeuvres Charitables et Sociales d'Hygiène et de Santé*, 175 Bd St Germain, Paris 6, where this brochure and that for 1948 may be obtained.

am I not myself a religious? I know that the Church thinks too much of this state of life for a Christian to be able to question for a single instant the good founded on this institution which will last until the end of the world.

Nevertheless, we must face those words: *It is too far from the Gospel!* There are, above all, those multiple problems with which you come in contact on all sides regarding the recruitment and the formation of your novices, regarding the care of their sanctification and of the apostolic efficacy of your works. . . .

First of all, in a few words, here is a general principle which will throw a light upon the whole of this statement. You are accused—men religious as well, but that is not my subject—of being too far from the Gospel. To the extent that this reproach has some foundation, the problem that you have to solve is, in the first place, spiritual—evangelical. Let the religious of whom you have charge be in fact what they are by title, let them really practise the evangelical counsels, to which their vows publicly oblige them, let them be really consecrated to God, to whom they have made profession of belonging, and your Institute will fulfil the whole of its function in the Church. In one stroke it will find itself magnificently adapted to the present day situation and its recruitment will pass your hopes.

Re-read the Gospel and take care to conform yourself with it completely. Be living Gospels: that is your vocation.

That, it seems to me, is the concrete problem you have to solve, and all the others are functions of this one. Let us pause first of all for a moment on what I might call the roots of the problem.

#### I.—THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

I distinguish three of them:

1. Your responsibilities are those of every Superior of a religious community. The Superior is charged with directing (from outside and according to well established means) the members of her Institute towards their essential end, the salvation of their soul, and their secondary end, the salvation of their neighbour.

2. You are women, charged with the government of women. That complicates the problem.

Man, in fact, seems to be more suited for government. Both nature and revelation teach us that the man is normally the head: the head of the human couple, the head of the home, the governor of the city. The woman, on the contrary, normally finds her happiness in her attachment to her husband, in her motherhood, in the cares of her home. Please do not regard this as a manifestation



of misogyny, or masculine pride. Men have their defects and they are not small ones! And to say that woman is complementary to man is in no way to diminish her importance. . . .

To be a religious does not mean to be less a woman. And, moreover, the vow of chastity leaving conjugal and maternal affection without an object, the psychology of a religious can be, for herself as for her Superior, a big source of difficulty.

Quite apart from anything else one must realise, without any dramatising, that the sanctification of the woman religious must come precisely through this affective asceticism and through all these difficulties.

Now, your congregations have generally received their Rules from a founder, or from a foundress depending very much on the masculine mind of a priest adviser. You run the risk of taking these rules and practising them in a way that impoverishes them to some little extent of their creative genius. Your fidelity in observing them, excellent as it may be in intention, runs the risk of over-stressing their details and of making the letter prevail over the spirit. Now, it is this which is foreign to the Gospel.

It is, in fact, in respect of your feminine nature that one must explain those defects with which you are so often reproached—that multiplicity of detailed prescriptions in which your absolute and tremendous gift to God is lost and disfigured, in a word, an unconscious pharisaism. Most certainly, feminine psychology has a greater need of a precise and firm framework to sustain it than masculine. It is precisely this which will help to neutralise its excess of sensibility. But it must not be to such an extent that the letter stifles the spirit.

We will bear in mind, then, this second remark that feminine psychology renders particularly difficult the always precarious balance between the letter and the spirit.

3. This balance is rendered still more difficult by the rapid evolution of the present day mentality of the young girl. The contemporary young girl, even if she lives in the most sheltered environment, has the cumulative effects within her of a twofold crisis: that of the general mentality today and that of the emancipation of woman.

(a) The present day mentality stirs up life to a bursting point, in its concrete reality, in its irrational elements, in its imaginative inspiration rather than in any rationally constructive effort.

As for Christians, they go straight to the essential and 'authentic' as they say, to the sources of the faith: the Bible, the Liturgy,

the Fathers of the Church; and to the essential object of faith: God attained in and by the ecclesiastical community of the Mystical Body. All that is not essential, all that is concerned with methods, practices, established institutions, devotions—such things are called in question once again. They see formalism everywhere. They want to re-discover everything for themselves. And it is there that the danger lies; a danger which must not, however, hide from us a magnificent *élan* and, it seems, an evident springtime in the Church: that gift of love of God which is the very essence of our Christian life leads many of our Christians to retire into the desert in order to adore in silence. Others, in the name of this same gift of love, plunge themselves into the midst of 'the masses', as they are called, in order to save them. Clearly there are a generosity and a call from God from which the religious life ought to benefit. Still more clearly, it must not reject them.

(b) The present day young woman is in the very midst of a *crisis of emancipation*. She is no longer under age. She no longer wishes to be under man's protection or inferior to him. Denying in a measure her nature (and it is that which is dangerous and vain), she wishes to be independent and autonomous, equal to man as regards culture, calling, the government of her life, her civic responsibilities. In a word, she wants to be of age.

Not everything is bad in these two tendencies, in this double crisis. And you must take into consideration not only the bad, but also the good, although differently, to ensure your recruitment and to govern your Institute with a care to adapt the religious life to a psychology less feminine, more virile perhaps, but—and I insist very much upon this—at the same time with an infinite care against 'coming down from the Cross' in a state of life based upon sacrifice.

And that introduces me to the second part of my statement.

## II.—THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SOLUTION

1. *Your responsibilities with regard to the sanctification of your Sisters.*

Christian perfection is measured according to charity; but at present it is above all important to recall that this sanctification comes about and can only come about through the cross. Christians today have to resolve an acute crisis in order to arrive at sanctity: they have a tendency to search for it not in the renunciation of the cross but in the fullest human development.

Most certainly, the divine life does not destroy the man in us. Man without God is no longer a man; it is God who gives him back



to himself. But we read in the Gospel that 'he that loveth his life shall lose it' (John, 12, 25); and that 'Whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it' (Luke, 17, 33).

Now, the whole question is to know exactly what this life is that we must lose and sacrifice to the Lord.

One remark may be interposed: the sacrifice of a spiritual creature is not a suicide; it is a birth, a re-birth to another life. A spirit like an angel and a man is not sacrificed to the Lord like the animal which the priest of the Old Testament killed on the altar of Yahweh. A spirit sacrifices itself by giving itself to the Lord, by loving with a total and gratuitous love: that is what it is to lose oneself, to give oneself. And that is why to lose oneself is to find oneself: it is the law of spiritual love.

For example, what gives the martyr his eminent value is not the body which is offered for death, it is the love which is shown by the offering. And at such a moment our spirit reaches the apogee of vitality. What gives the cross its redeeming power is not the fact that the Son of God died upon it; it is that he should love to such a point, to the point of dying. Where shall we find more love, and consequently more life, than in our Lord dying on the cross? Therefore, we must never forget that the work of our sanctification consists in directing everything (up to the annihilation of all the rest, if need be) to this life according to the spirit which is a gift of love to our heavenly Father.

It follows that the religious life, the official school of sanctity instituted by the Church, rests essentially on the Cross and on sacrifice.

I hesitate to use those words: cross, sacrifice; because too many Christians, even religious, make such a verbal exaggeration, such a flaunting emotional unreality of them! But the reality is there, it is of the reality of the cross lived and not dreamed that I speak.

There is in every sacrifice the matter of the sacrifice and the priest's act of offering. Every baptised person is marked with the sign of the cross. He must share in the Cross of Christ, and he shares at the same time with Christ, victim of the one sacrifice acceptable to the Father, and with the priest offering the one sacrifice. In the religious life it is the use of exterior possessions, of our body, of our will which is sacrificed by the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. That is the matter of our sacrifice. But who will offer it in union with the priestly offering of Christ? Ourselves, in the depth of our personality, in a gift of love so much the more intense and total as our liberty and our power of loving are more alive. Those are therefore the faculties that the religious

life, because it is essentially a sacrifice, ought to exalt and not to destroy. For if they were destroyed there would be no longer a sacrifice since there would be no longer either an offerer or an offering. What would the bread and wine be if there were no priest to offer them? What would happen to our poverty, our chastity, our obedience, if our love did not offer them to the Lord?

Thus, by reason of your charge, you have to take care not only that the matter of the sacrifice remains integral, but also that this matter be really offered by the most intense, the most personal, the greatest possible gift of love. Once again, it is love, it is charity which produces and which is the measure of sanctity. That then is the end that you are pursuing. By what means can you who are Superiors help those under you to attain this end? Here are a few principles.

(a) *A good Superior will take great care that the personal sacrifice of each sister is made to God and not to herself.*

That is a point where the exercise of government is particularly difficult in a feminine environment. More rich than man in affection, as I have reminded you, the woman religious (who moreover sees herself deprived of the masculine support of which she normally has need in order to maintain her psychological balance) unconsciously seeks a compensation for this sacrifice by transferring to her superior or her novice mistress the unused affection.

Paul Claudel has written wickedly in *The Satin Slipper*: 'There is nothing a woman detests more than her liberty'. To love is, for her more than for a man, to hand herself over; to think, to act, to live as the one whom she loves thinks, acts and lives. The gift of self that nature has likewise demanded of man is that of his activity; woman gives her heart. That is her greatness, but it is also a difficulty, for in giving herself in this way it is also herself that she is seeking, the joy that she finds in giving herself.

Now, it is this unconscious search after self in the gift of obedience that you must discern in the soul of your sisters so as to discourage it. A great temptation to every Superior is to govern by these affections; it is a temptation to an easy way, for herself and for her subordinates. For herself, not only because her maternal instinct here finds its object (not to speak of her vanity), but also because it is easier to govern infatuated subordinates.

It is also a temptation to an easy way for the subordinates, above all when they are women: it is so natural to them, and consequently so agreeable, to act through affection. It is so easy to obey a Superior in order to please her! But what remains then of true



religious obedience and of its supernatural motive? We see very well in the drama which is produced sometimes by a change of Superiors.

Of course all this is generally unconscious; the emotional attachment and the flattery which surround certain Superiors are not deliberate or organised. But that only makes it the more serious and the more dangerous, because in this way we continue to call obedience and sacrifice to God what are in fact no more, either wholly or in part, than an emotional attachment and a sacrilegious transfer of a right to a creature. And the more brilliant and good the Superior the greater the danger, particularly for her subjects.

I quite understand that the sacrifice made by the religious in obedience passes through the Superior, but it is to God that it is offered, and it passes through her only to the extent that she embodies and interprets the rules and constitutions. The Superior is an instrument which acts only from the outside, as we have already noticed. You must regard every person as sacred, above all every person who is baptised and called by the Holy Spirit to union with God. Each soul is created immediately by God, without intermediary; it is consequently ordained immediately to him, and there can be no one between it and God. We can only intervene from without, striving to give to the souls confided to us the most suitable means to advance them in the way of sanctity; but it is God who leads them. 'Only God can deify', said St Thomas. Consequently the Superior is only a servant: a servant of souls, a servant of the Holy Spirit in souls: 'Ecce ancilla Domini'. The sanctification of each of her religious is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit, and entirely, though on another plane, that of the liberty of each sister. That is why, like John the Baptist, the Superior is only the friend of the Bridegroom: 'He must increase and I must decrease'.

It may be that feminine psychology makes the thing particularly difficult because of the affective complications of which I have just spoken. But must we say that the Superior should strive to suppress all affection in herself and in her subordinates? Surely not. Charity is cordial or it is not charity. What must be suppressed is what would hinder the gift of God, what would turn aside towards the Superior the sacrifice which is to be made to God.

I am going to take an example borrowed from the life of St Theresa of the Child Jesus, whose prioress exercised some little 'affective tyranny' over the community. I will read you the text of the deposition of Sister Martha of Jesus at the process of beatification: 'At the beginning of my life at Carmel, I was myself attached to our Mother Prioress by an affection which I believed

to be true and good, but Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, who was a little saint, saw at once that my affection was too human and was doing much harm to my soul. On 8th December 1892, an unforgettable day for me, she drew me to her and said to me: 'You are causing much grief to our Lord because you seek after our Mother too much; your affection is too natural, and that is not only a great obstacle to your perfection, but puts your soul in great danger. If you are always going to behave like that, you would have done better to have stayed in the world!' So speaks a saint! 'If our Mother sees that you are troubled, you can very well tell her all that I have just said to you. I would rather that she sent me away from the Monastery if she wishes, than fail in my duty to warn you of it for the good of your soul.'

A good Superior does not tolerate being loved as Sister Martha of Jesus loved her prioress. She would be the cause of a sin of idolatry, setting up herself as the idol. It is a direct sin against God, and especially in regard to persons called by him.

To be sure, a Superior ought to love her inferiors and take care to be loved if possible. To be sure, a Superior ought always to be ready to receive the confidences of her sisters, but in certain cases she must refuse them or cut them short. Above all, she must not impose them or solicit them directly or indirectly.

You know the express will of the Church on this point: a superior ought to exact obedience, but not according to her own whims, to her own personality, to her own judgment, but to the Holy Spirit, particularly as he expresses himself in the Rules and Constitutions, which she has only to apply. That demands much detachment, much discretion, and, above all, much charity.

The technique of your asceticism and your mysticism as Superior should be based upon these points. I wish to pause an instant to consider two of these qualities: a great spirit of faith and great objectivity.

A great faith. A Superior needs very much of it in order never, never to forget that it is not herself who is obeyed, but God. She needs much faith to believe at each instant and in all circumstances in the action of the Holy Ghost in souls, to see the sisters as God sees them, if possible, in order afterwards to love them as God loves them. She is really at the service of God and the sisters, and not contrariwise. The scene of the washing of the feet is the charter and, as it were, the sacrament of superiority.

She needs also much objectivity. I mean that she must see things and persons as they really are and not as she would like them to be, nor as she is accustomed to see them. And that is very difficult.



Detachment from self and charity will help very much towards it, but also good general and religious instruction.

There are two ways of judging: by intuition and by knowledge. Since you are women, above all do not trust too much to your intuitions; control them, or see that they are controlled; have a solid knowledge of theology, of Canon Law, of psychology, which will give your judgment the objectivity which it needs in order to be equitable and rid yourself of your own subjectivity.

(b) Second principle: *A religious does not sacrifice herself to the Rule, but to God*, or more exactly, to God through the Rule. The Rule is only a means guaranteed by the Church. God is the end. All the rest is but means of attaining him.

Now, the weight of human nature tends to entangle us in these means, so that we attach ourselves to them, lose ourselves in them, serve them instead of their serving us. That is a particularly feminine defect.

The Superior must not weary of reminding her subjects that they entered religion because God called **them** to himself, that everything else is only a means to that, that all the prescriptions of the Rule are ordered to that, that they are **only** fruitful if one passes through them in order to go to God. A means is only useful in so far as it leads to its end; otherwise, one takes it as being itself the end. And that is a fresh idolatry—the idolatry of the Superior, and the idolatry of the Rule.

It is the duty of the Superior to take care that the means provided by the Rule really accomplish their function as means, that is to say, that they lead to God. And in order to do this she must have the end—God and charity—always in view and show how all the means lead to that. For example, show how our vow of poverty leads to God by the uprooting that it exacts, the daily abandonment to Providence, etc. . . . It is necessary to say it, and above all it is necessary to live it.

The Superior ought thus to show how each point of the Rule is connected with the evangelical counsels, and consequently leads to God. For it is not sufficient that the Rule should be observed to the letter; what use would these Constitutions be, if they were not also observed according to the spirit?

To keep the spirit without the letter is only an illusion and a farce: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me', our Lord has said. (John, 15, 21). But the letter without the spirit is dead. The Superior ought therefore to see that the Rule is observed according to the letter and the spirit. Bear in mind our Lord's condemnation of the pharisees because they left the

weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith. Thus, the spirit of the Gospel does not despise the Law even in the little details. On the contrary, it gives it its soul and its fruitfulness from within, in order that the exterior may also become pure. The Gospel is crystal clear on all these points.

Therefore, between the pharisaism of a letter impoverished of its spirit, even contradicting it, and the illusion of a spirit freed entirely from the letter, the true medium is difficult to discover and to follow, above all in our own times. It is one of the heaviest of your spiritual responsibilities. Depend upon God, the Holy Spirit and the Church, who will not fail you if you are faithful to them.

(c) Finally notice this: *the aim of the Superior is not to promote the sanctification of children under guardianship, but of grown-up people*, mature people, each day knowing a little better what they are doing, each day willing it with a stronger and freer will.

Consequently, she ought to set to work to develop the personality of each one. St Thomas says that the greatest of the moral virtues is prudence, that virtue which allows us to judge of the means for attaining the end. And it is not difficult for him to show that without it no virtue is possible, for a judgment dictated by prudence intervenes in each one. Consequently, the Superior ought to strive to give occasion to her Sisters, without departing from obedience, to exercise their own prudence. There are cases in which the Sisters must be left alone to their personal conscience, after having enlightened them by all means, and, in case of need, directing them; but let each one take her responsibilities courageously, like an adult, which she is or which she ought to become. At all events it is thus that the sister will increase in the virtue of prudence, and consequently in all the other virtues. It is thus that she will reach maturity and that her gift to God will be greater and more worthy of him. A religious who habitually obeys unreflectingly without exercising her own prudence cannot avoid weakening herself morally and psychologically. God is the God of the living and of rational beings, not of the dead and of automatons—of robots, as they say nowadays.

A priest of sound judgment recently confided to me that, on his advice, several young girls had entered religion. 'After a few years', he told me, 'I meet them again stifled, some of them literally block-heads'—forgive me, it is his word—'with no deep and personal supernatural life.' And he concluded: 'I no longer dare direct my penitents towards the religious life'.

There lies, believe me, one of the causes of your failure to recruit. I know how difficult it is to distinguish the true personality from



the false; the caprice and independence of every daughter of Eve from the true liberty of the daughter of God, and that it is no less difficult to bring out the latter than to destroy the former. But I do not believe that the right solution lies either in confining them like wild animals or in treating them as mental defectives.

St Thomas distinguishes seniors and juniors in the faith. The seniors, he says, are those whose faith is precise and well-informed; the juniors are those who believe through the faith of the seniors. The latter is the faith of the coal heaver, who believes what his parish priest believes. That is not the ideal. The more seniors there are in the Church, the greater it will be and the more God will be glorified.

It is to some extent the same in the religious life. The more your Institute is composed of seniors, the greater and the holier it will be, and the sacrifice made by each one of your Sisters to our Lord will be nobler and more worthy of God. I know well that all your Sisters are not called to this spiritual majority. The duty of the Superior, however, above all in our times, is to encourage this 'coming of age' in the spiritual life of her Sisters.

2. One last word on the secondary end of religious life, the active works. From this point of view you are responsible both with regard to the Sisters and to the neighbour whom they succour.

The social service that you render society by your works of charity is relatively secondary—before being a social service it is a witness to Christ and to the Church. You bear witness to the love of God for men. Consequently, if possible, each work of mercy of your subordinates should be, for themselves as for their neighbour, a divine act, something like a transfiguration; that Christ should be suddenly there and that people should see him through them. For this you must watch carefully the theological value, the faith, hope and charity, of your Sisters, the devotedness, failing which it would be philanthropy, praiseworthy but without supernatural value either for the neighbour or for the Sisters.

Now, it is difficult to love one's neighbour out of charity. One can love him in so many other ways, noble in other respects, but which do not proceed from the love of God, from genuine charity. The feminine heart notably, so maternal by nature, inclines spontaneously towards her neighbour's wretchedness in order to relieve it. That is good; but it is the duty of the Superior to see that the Sisters rise above this natural plane. Religious must love their neighbour for the love of God, and not for the joy—equivocal—of giving themselves. It is not a question of giving oneself; it is a question of giving God, and is quite another thing. It is a question

of loving the neighbour for God, in order that he may love God. He must be loved, not only through duty, but through seeing God in him and him in God. To love him means to love him in the depth of his personality, in his vocation, with a sacred respect for his liberty and the Holy Spirit's action in him.

Now, that is impossible without a great love of God, which cannot be conceived without a life of intense and personal prayer. It is important consequently that the Superior should watch with care over the life of prayer of her Sisters and the use that they make of all the means of sanctification; she ought to take care notably not to overwork her religious, so that they are able to draw real profit from their exercises of piety, spiritual reading, retreats, etc.

The multiplicity and the urgency of the tasks that summon you, aggravated for some of you by the lack of vocations, often places you in very difficult situations. It seems to me that your duty is clear: do not seek the quantity, but the apostolic and spiritual quality of your works, and in order to do that give an absolute priority to the real life of prayer of your religious, to their solid spiritual formation, to all the means useful for their sanctification.

Of course you often meet with such violent and imperative appeals that you dare not refuse them. Let me tell you a little anecdote I heard recently: a teaching congregation found themselves obliged to close a house for want of religious to keep it going. The Bishop of the place—and one can well understand it—formally opposed this action, for it meant a church-school would disappear. But the Superior replied: 'My Lord, I will leave the house open if, before our Lord, you will be responsible for the salvation of the religious of my Institute'. And the Bishop did not insist.

Understand then, first of all, that you must safeguard the quality of your apostolic activity. Most certainly the sanctification of your Sisters, begun, first of all, in intimate prayer, ought to be followed by devotion to the neighbour. The active side of your vocation consists in sanctifying yourself by devotion to your neighbour, but that is only possible by a genuine charity, and, consequently, only if you have, first of all, a genuine interior life, a true love of God. That is why, in watching over the quality of this charity, the Superior assures in one stroke both the sanctification of her religious and the apostolic value of their activity.

And with the grace of God such a community, when it thus radiates the presence of God, recovers the grace of its foundation; it inherits its original promise, and it accomplishes its rôle in the Church.



It is on this optimistic note that I want to conclude. Your spiritual responsibilities above all at the present hour, are crushing; but the grace of God is the grace of God; and at an hour when the Holy Spirit seems to be giving to the Church a renewed youth, how can we doubt but that through you he will infuse into the religious life the sap of a new spring time?

For myself, at least, I believe that with all my heart. May he grant to all to be faithful to their inspiration, and the religious life will know new life and vigour.

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## THRONE OF WISDOM

BY

JOHN TODD

### I. THE WOMAN WHO WAS POOR: SPOUSE AND MOTHER.



S the first, original sin was committed through the sinful mediation of a woman, so it was through a woman's consent and just mediation that we were redeemed from the guilt of this sin. Conceived without the stain of original sin, our Lady was the second Eve. She was the perfect tabernacle of God, simply the mother of Jesus, because she was utterly selfless, because in an old metaphor of the Fathers revived in a recent book, she was like a pipe which waits for the air to blow through it to make music, the Reed of God.

Our Lady was the throne of Wisdom because she can be perfectly described as the Woman who was poor. Here at last was the complete gift of self, the unconditional sacrifice of the creature which God looked for in Adam and Eve, and looked for in vain. So our Lady became infinitely rich, *Sedes Sapientiae*, and entered upon the earthly motherhood with that perfection which she carried on to her eternal motherhood wherein she dispenses to man the same Wisdom whom she mothered in Palestine.

In this article historical facts and theological conceptions are combined in a sacramental way for we are considering the Gospel. In the gospel everything is historical; in the gospel everything is theological. Here is our Lady, living the perfect life; here is our Lady living as the Mother of Grace. Here is our Lady, the perfect spouse of Divine Wisdom; here is our Lady, the Mother of divine Wisdom. Here is the centre of the Marian mystery, unfathomable—in fact two mysteries, incomprehensible apart and

only understood together in the human person of 'Mary'. From the moment of her immaculate conception to her coronation in heaven she was God's beloved, always responding perfectly to every proposal of the divine Lover. Yet this perfection proceeded from the privilege of being the mother of God. For this task she must be perfect. And this privilege was only won for her by the foreseen sacrifice in which she was going to participate, of the son whom she was going to have. The twofold mystery of Mary leads us straight to the mystery of Jesus, crucified.

In truth the mysteries of Mary's two privileges are inseparable. The Church allows us to repeat: '*Beata viscera quae portaverunt aeterni Patris Filium; et beata ubera quae lactaverunt Christum Dominum;*' echoing the 'woman in the multitude', overwhelmed with the wonder of Jesus. It was his evident Wisdom which struck her. Our Lord had been describing how an unclean spirit will return with seven other spirits worse than itself to possess again a man who puts nothing to replace the spirit when it goes out of him:—'till the last state of that man is worse than the first. When he spoke thus, a woman in the multitude said to him aloud, Blessed is the womb that bore thee, the breast which thou hast sucked'. Whilst we may echo this praise of Mary's physical motherhood we may not ignore our Lord's complementary, and in his gentle way corrective reply: 'And he answered, Shall we not say, Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it?' The Church regards this as referring directly to our Lady, though in a way respecting her desire to remain hidden during her life on earth. Here, in our Lord's own words, is crystallised the perfect praise of Mary, spouse and mother, Keeper of the Word, Throne of Wisdom.

God's plan was this from the beginning, according to the words of Genesis, the Protoevangelium (2 v. 18) '*Non est bonum sese hominem solum, faciamus ei adjutorium simile sibi*' and (3 v. 20) '*et vocavit Adam nomen uxoris suae Heva eo quod mater esset cunctorum viventium*'. Here is the divine plan, for woman, of companionship and motherhood; she is to be a help and companion to man and a mother of new lives, his children. This plan finds its perfect type in the Holy Family. Mary is the perfect companion of St Joseph and the perfect mother of Jesus. She is the second Eve, companion and mother, achieving perfection in a human family. God sanctified her and she became a companion to God and the mother of all living, the second Eve in a world of Grace; mother of Grace and companion to all men. And this is the sanctification, the assumption into the kingdom of God of the natural life. 'The Lord is with thee', 'Thou hast found favour in the sight



of God', 'Blessed art thou among women', 'Behold thy mother'. The gospel eternally is. Jesus and Mary are risen and reign in these mysteries, in our souls, till we each become another Throne of Wisdom.

'My Son, why hast thou treated us so? Think, what anguish of mind thy father and I have endured, searching for thee.' There is Mary indeed, searching for Wisdom, searching for her son. 'But', he asked them, 'what reason had you to search for me? Could you not tell that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?' This was the first public manifestation of Wisdom. His reply is the reply of the Son of the eternal Father, and a reply that presumed and relied upon Mary's 'Ecce ancilla . . .'. He knows that she and St Joseph have suffered anguish of mind. Simeon had promised her that long ago, and she had accepted. Jesus makes no comment. His and Mary's way is a way of sorrows, a way of the cross. It is the will of his Father, to whom he simply refers Mary and St Joseph in his reply. One is reminded of his later words: 'My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish the task he gave me'; or again, 'I do not do anything on my own authority, but speak as my Father has instructed me to speak,' Jesus simply reminds his father and mother of what they already knew, all things are within the providence of God, divine Wisdom disposes all things, 'What reason had you to search for me?'

It was Mary's complete humility and poverty of spirit, and her sympathy with St Joseph which led her to search. The fourth commandment required a son to honour his parents; the parents must deserve and demand this honour. She never doubted God's power; she is not over-anxious. She is our Lady of Sorrows, not of anxieties. The Latin says simply, *dolentes quaerebamus te*, sorrowing we sought thee. In her complete simplicity Mary is the perfect mother, she is nearly heart-broken without Jesus, she must seek her son; she is the perfect spouse, she is nearly heart-broken without Jesus, she cannot but seek him.

Our Lord's reply seems to have been deliberately mysterious. The difficulty of the translation is no mere translator's difficulty. Jesus did not mean himself to be understood except spiritually, supernaturally, through faith, 'nesciebatis quia in his quae Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse?'. 'These words which he spoke to them were beyond their understanding.' It must have been rather bewildering. Yet St Joseph and Mary knew that God *was* his Father. The angel Gabriel had called him the Son of God. The answer reminded them, perhaps for the first time from our Lord's

own lips, of the truth that he was so often to repeat, in one form or another. He was the Son of God.

'But he went down with them on their journey to Nazareth, and lived there in subjection to them, while his mother kept in her heart the memory of all this.' And so gradually the eye of faith and the teaching of the Word changed the text: '*ipsi non intellexerunt verbum*' into '*beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud*'.

## II. MATER GRATIAE.

The next public appearance of our Lady in the gospel starts with the same sort of mysterious question from our Lord: 'Nay, woman, why dost thou trouble me with that? My time has not yet come'. Immediately we are surprised as we were by 'What reason had you to search for me?'. The question seems almost rude—and the answer obvious. But this is only to those who will not hear the words as mysteries, to those who hearing, may not hear, and seeing, may not see. 'Why dost thou trouble me with that? My time has not yet come.' Again we have the sense of predestination, of complete humility before the will of his Father; of Wisdom overseeing all.

And again events proceed according to the wish of Mary, as when 'he went down with them on their journey to Nazareth, and lived there in subjection to them'. (Then it was certainly 'my time has not yet come'!) At Cana our Lord is again subject to his mother, this time in conceding to her wish for his intervention. He intervened: 'Fill the waterpots with water'. 'Now draw, and give a draught to the master of the feast.' The Miracle was performed. The incarnation was further extended into the natural world; and the world's salvation was prefigured.

What a perfect microcosm of redemption this event is! We are at the banquet after a marriage, naturally the happiest of all human events, sacramentally the image of the union of Christ with his Church. But there is something lacking. Mary asks Jesus to repair it. What is the lack? Wine; the juice of grapes that our Lord is going to change into his Blood in the sacrifice of the Mass, the juice of grapes, fruit of the vine, image of the union of all Christians in the mystical body of Christ. The miraculous change is made at our Lady's request, for she it is who has prompted our Lord and prepared the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'. This first of our Lord's miracles symbolises his original entry into the world and his perennial re-entry at the words of consecration at Holy Mass. Here also our Lady always presides. The Mother of God is the Mother of Grace.



Water is made wine. What a parable! Water becomes wine; in a similar way at Mass the water of our humanity is lost in the wine of his Blood. Dropping water into the wine in the chalice the priest says: '*Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti, et mirabilis reformasti: da nobis per hujus aquae et vini mysterium, ejus Divinitatis esse consortes, qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps, Jesus Christus Filius tuus Dominus noster*'. 'O God, who in a marvellous manner didst create and ennoble man's being, and in a manner still more marvellous didst renew it; grant that through the mystical union of this water and wine we may become companions of the Godhead of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord, even as he vouchsafed to share with us our human nature.' At Cana our Lord wonderfully changed water into wine prefiguring his Passion whereby we were to be changed from noble but fallen creatures into companions of the Godhead.

But the miracle was hidden from the eyes of the bride and bridegroom and the guests. Seeing they see not. 'And the master of the feast tasted this water, which had now been turned into wine, he did not know whence it came, only the servants who had drawn the water knew that.' First of all people to know our Lord's first miracle were the servants, drawers of water. Just so also the most despised sort of Jews, shepherds, were the first at the crib: 'and so they went with all haste and found Mary and Joseph there, with the child lying in the manger. On seeing him, they discovered the truth of what had been told them about this child. All those who heard it were full of amazement at the story which the shepherds told them.' So too the servants who drew the water made wine must have told others for 'So, in Cana of Galilee Jesus began his miracles, and made known the glory that was his, so that his disciples learned to believe'.

Cana is a veritable treasure of kindness and delicacy. God shows himself to be supremely interested in our affairs, in fact supremely interested in a Jewish wedding feast—not just the wedding, but the feast, while some might be found who would drink too much of the wine that our Lord provided. All receive gifts here, the bride and bridegroom and other guests receive wine, the servants receive the pleasurable secret knowledge of the miracle, the disciples receive faith, for it was now 'that his disciples learned to believe'. And Mary had mediated in this gift of faith for it was she who had asked for the miracle. Mary had mediated in the gift of faith to those who were to be the first priests of her son's Church.

Our Lord, the central figure, the Word, remains somewhat mysterious, a sign of contradiction. 'Why dost thou trouble me with

that?' 'Fill the waterpots . . .', 'now draw . . .' All that is seen is divine power: 'Jesus began his miracles and made known the glory that was his'. The human foundations were ignored for the moment. The sign and the gift of faith alone are given. Later and gradually during his public life our Lord revealed himself. Wisdom unfolded itself gradually as it unfolds in the history of the Church. As Jesus's own life unfolded he became seemingly more gentle and more human as well as more undoubtedly divine. So in the Church's history in these later days we have the consoling devotion to our Lord's Sacred Heart and we have the manifold apparitions of our Lady.

In the Gospel as our Lord's own gentleness and humanity are seen more clearly our Lady retires. In fact she does not speak again. Cana has revealed her mediating between God and man, distributing the riches of Eternal Wisdom. She is seen as the Mother of Grace. Cana is the summit of the visible historical revelation of Mary's personality, for on that day she openly gave her Son to the world. She is the throne of that wisdom given to the world, Wisdom given to 'little ones' first, to shepherds, to servants and then to all the world. From now on Mary has to learn 'what is in man'. She has to learn the wisdom of sorrow and suffering, of the cross, of crucifixion, of martyrdom, of living death.

## A MEDIEVAL BOOK FOR TODAY

BY

KATHERINE CHOLMELEY



URING the 14th century, several books on the interior life were written in England. The most useful of these is, perhaps, the *Scale of Perfection*, composed by Water Hilton, a Canon of the Augustinian Priory of Thurgarton in Nottinghamshire.

It is as fresh in manner as though it had been written yesterday. We feel, while reading it, as though we were learning from some wise spiritual director of our own time. The style is easy, the sentences simple in construction. There is little that we may regard as archaic; the book is as applicable to any century as is the *Imitation*. The guidance along the road of the spiritual life is just that which we would hear today from an experienced confessor, or the skilled conductor of a Retreat. It is eminently practical. Charity and humility are the two virtues on which men should build the structure of the contemplative life. The chief study and



reading should be that of Holy Writ. Far better than any secular study, is the study of the Scriptures that the soul may learn to see Jesus therein. The customary prayer should be that of the psalms, and the Office of the Church, for these are inspired by the Holy Spirit: in using them, we are safe, and using the best language.

The section on distractions is so acute as to be startling. 'Thou sayest that . . . when thou wouldest have the mind of thy heart upward to God in thy prayer, thou feelest so mickle many thoughts in vain, of thy own deeds before done, or what thou shalt do, and of other men's deeds, and such many other . . . and the more thou travailest to keep thine heart, the further it is from thee, and harder.' Is not this the very manner of the straying of our thoughts, absorbed in the actual past, and the possible future, whether or no we wrestle with them as we should? Walter Hilton impresses on the anchoress, for whom the book was written, that she should at the beginning set her attention and will on God 'as whole and clean' as she could *shortly* in her mind. What wisdom is contained in that word 'shortly': it shields the soul from scruple, and also from undue occupation with the prelude to prayer, for she must set to work on the actual praying. If there is failure, the soul must not be too angry with herself, or impatient with God, for not giving her consolation. The distractions should be an occasion for realising one's own feebleness. The soul must turn humbly to God, trusting he will make her feeble prayer good and profitable.

'There is many a soul', he concludes, 'which may never find rest of heart in prayer, but all her lifetime is striving with her thoughts, and is tarried and troubled with them; yet, if she keep her in meekness and charity, she shall have full mickle meed in heaven, for her good travail.'

This is extraordinarily consoling to those who struggle to pray well, yet always appear to fail. Hilton's method is often strikingly similar to that of St Francis de Sales. Trust in God, and a humble waiting on his will.

He does not, of course, encourage laziness. On the contrary, the purpose of the book is to draw the soul away from outward things, and from preoccupation with this world, to contemplation. When a contemplative man chants the psalms or any other vocal prayer he says only in his heart the words that are formed by his mouth: no other. The body, then, becomes naught but an instrument on which 'the soul bloweth sweet notes of ghostly lauding to Jhesus'.

The book was written in the first place for a recluse, who is addressed as 'Ghostly Sister'; but it is applicable to anyone who

feels drawn to contemplation, whether religious, or in the world. Walter Hilton, like Richard Rolle, says remarkably little about bodily penances. He urges commonsense in the matter of food. We must not, of course, be greedy, or take undue pleasure in eating, but yet, each should eat what he feels necessary in order to be able to pray. He urges interior mortification: charity, meekness, forgiveness, detachment: things not easy to fallen human nature. It is noteworthy, in passing, to see that he points out to the anchoress that a married woman, in the world, may be far higher in the spiritual life than she. She is not to think herself better than others, better than the laity, because she is 'enclosed in a house'.

He emphasises that the spiritual life, in much, must consist of struggle: the soul has to be reformed to the image of Jesus. Jesus desires the soul, and he implants in the soul the desire for himself: this is the heart of the spiritual life. The soul must find him within herself, but turning to that quest, she comes first on the dark image of sin. That image must be broken down and replaced by his. The dark image, which Hilton figures under the shape of the human body, is made up of the Seven Deadly Sins, pride being the head and sloth the feet. Anger is typified by the arms, for it is with our arms that we strike. Envy, says Hilton, is the breast, for envy dwells in the heart, a devilish sin, not of the flesh but far worse. He warns us that the dark image will never be wholly done away: it remains as a peril and an enemy, for all our lifetime.

We have to find Jesus in the house of our soul, as the woman in the parable sought for the coin which she had lost. He is there in the house, but hidden: we have to seek diligently to find him. We must light our lantern, that is God's Word: Holy Scripture, and also reason, and then search till we find. The light will first show up all the dust, the filth, and the motes in the house: all the faults and sins of the soul. They must be swept away with the besom of the dread of God, and so may Jesus be found.

In the latter part of the second book of the *Scale* Walter Hilton deals with the finding. It is the reward of struggle. At first it will be painful and difficult to draw the mind from being fixed on creatures, and the heart from attachment to them: to train thought and love to be fixed on God. The soul must pass through a night of longing when its constant prayer must be: 'I am nought; I desire nought but Jhesu'. We associate the phrase 'the dark night of the soul' with St John of the Cross; but Walter Hilton had written of it more than a century before. Between one day and another, he reminds us, must come the night. The first day we know is that of this world; but if we turn from it to seek the other,



we must lose its light: before it is possible to attain the light of contemplation, the soul must pass through the night. It becomes a quiet night, a restful night, but nevertheless, a dark night. Jesus is there, but he cannot be seen. Our prayer must be the prayer of utter faith, and loyal persistent longing. Created things must draw us and hold us no longer, to them our eyes must be closed.

Our natural feeling, at the suggestion of turning away from creatures, is apt to be one of fear, a sense that we are turning towards nothingness, to blankness. We, being creatures of flesh, may dread the thought of turning towards Spirit. We feel the need for images, and so God himself has helped us by taking our flesh. St John, leaning on the bosom of Jesus, may have lain with eyes shut like a child, and have listened only to the beating of the heart of his Master. With his eyes closed to outer things he might learn from the love within that heart. We must not fear to turn from creatures, and shut away our thoughts from them. Our Lord himself, as Hilton shows, will come to our aid.

The soul which has striven manfully to cast out the dark image of sin, comes to a state where grace makes it quiet and peaceable. If anyone is unjust, if anyone is unkind, it takes the hurt with gentleness. This is the result of love: of the Holy Spirit working 'wisely and softly' in the soul. The actions of men become of little account, for the soul desires only the sight of Jesus: it comes to set no value on itself. 'The reverent sight and lovely beholding of Jhesu' so possess it that it cares not for praise or blame, for honour nor for scorn. It does not want to be concerned with the opinion of its fellow men, but only to think of Jesus.

Only the Holy Ghost, 'love unformed' can bestow on the soul love towards God. We cannot love God by our own power. We must struggle and strive against sin, but the love of Jesus is a gift.

'Ask then of God', says Walter Hilton, 'nothing but this gift of love, that is, the Holy Ghost. . . . 'There is no gift of God that is both giver and gift, but this gift of love.' Then will the soul be quiet and humble, and perceive that she does nothing of herself: there is no good thought or deed that she can call her own. It is Jesus who does every good deed and every good thought through her.

He will show himself to the contemplative soul, when and how he pleases. She must keep herself still, waiting on his pleasure. He gives gentle stirrings of love that come and go.

The great love, the fixed attachment to Jesus, is so strong that it slays all the deadly sins. The soul no longer desires the excitements and interests of this world: 'it is pain to the soul of a lover to speak or hear anything that might hinder the freedom of his

heart to think on Jhesus'. The soul desires Jesus only, and is tranquil. Then will he speak to her, not, of course, in an audible voice, but by riveting the attention, and opening the understanding, so that she sees him as a master, father, or 'lovely spouse'.

## MAKING TIME FOR GOD

BY

H. C. GRAEF



OW I should like to deepen my spiritual life by more prayer and reading; but I simply haven't the time—this complaint can often be heard from many who earnestly desire a more intimate relationship with God and feel that what prevents them from achieving it is mainly lack of that minimum of leisure which is indispensable for an intense life of prayer.

Yet, if we look at the Saints we shall discover the paradoxical phenomenon that the more they prayed the more time they seemed to have for their apostolic work. Whether we take St Dominic or St Teresa, St Bernard or St Catherine of Siena, we are confronted with the fact that they accomplished in a very short time tasks sufficient for several ordinary long human lives, and in addition gave what seems to us a disproportionate amount of time to prayer. It looks, indeed, as if our Lord's promise that to those who seek first the Kingdom of God all else will be added includes also time. If we give time to him he will give it back to us with interest. This may sound somewhat mysterious, but the importance of the time factor in the spiritual life will become clearer if it is first considered from the purely natural point of view.

Though the proverb says that time is money most people are much more careful about how they spend their money than about spending their time. Yet the Saints regard time as a gift from God, granted them in order to work out their salvation in it. There is a poignant urgency in many of the New Testament sayings on time, for example in those words of our Lord, 'I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work' (Jn. 9 :4), and of St Paul, 'See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly . . . redeeming the time' (Eph. 5: 15 f.).

In this matter, as in so many others, the children of the world are often wiser than the children of light. What is the secret of those businessmen, writers, doctors, politicians, who seem to cram into the twenty-four hours of their day three times as much as other

people without appearing unduly hurried or flustered? It is easily told, but not so easily followed: It is simply a systematically planned day in which first things are allowed to come first, with fixed hours for everything, yet sufficient elasticity to allow for unforeseen interruptions.

The 'Rule of Life' recommended by spiritual directors is nothing more than such a 'planned day' with special regard to the life of the soul, where it is particularly necessary, because prayer and spiritual reading are so easily crowded out by other things that seem more urgent at the moment. One argues that it will be possible to find half an hour for prayer later on—and then it is bedtime, and the half hour has never materialised. For the period (or periods) of prayer it is important to choose a time when interruptions are least likely to occur, and for many this will be the early morning, the time preferred by our Lord himself and by many Saints after him. But if this should be impossible, there is always the chance of slipping into a church for half an hour after work, before going home for dinner, or possibly during the lunch hour, or before going to bed. The chief thing is to set apart at least one definite period and to keep to it regularly, unless prevented by exceptional circumstances.

Beside these set periods of prayer there are other possibilities of 'making time for God'; the lives of the Saints are full of examples. When St Catherine was deliberately deprived by her parents of any time for herself she humbly endured the trial, and while it lasted turned the most commonplace occupations into opportunities for prayer. Modern life, too, is full of such opportunities: Père Lamy used to say the Rosary while walking from one place to another visiting his parishioners. Saying the Rosary while waiting for a bus, or a train, or in a restaurant queue, walking to and from one's work, etc., is an excellent means of fixing one's mind on God, as well as of making intercession for the men and women around, so many of whom know not 'the gift of God'. It is difficult at first to realise how many opportunities there are during the day for prayer—often no more than a few seconds, but they will suffice for a quick thought of God, and he, whose delight is to walk with the children of men, will not leave souls to struggle alone.

For to 'make time' deliberately and perseveringly, even in the face of great difficulties, is the work of man. But since God is never outdone in generosity he will ordinarily reward faithfulness not only by progress in prayer, but also by opportunities for extending the time given to it. It is always best to take our Lord at his



word. 'Ask and it shall be given unto you'—why not ask him for time for prayer—provided, of course, that it is his will for a soul to pray more? Just as in St Catherine's life he broke down the resistance of her parents so that she was left free to pray, he may do it for others, if he sees them determined to give all to him. But the gift must come from him, it must not be snatched; neglecting the duties of one's state for the sake of prayer would be the wrong way round and would lead only to illusion. The soul may surely trust the Holy Ghost to take care of her sanctification, for even if more time should not be given, he will find ways of uniting her to himself more closely even in the turmoil of the world.

Generally, however, the soul will find that more time is, in fact, granted, whether by a change of occupation or by a decrease in the demands of family and social life, or similar factors. There is also another way, though it needs prudence and the guidance of the spiritual director. It is a striking phenomenon in the lives of most mystics that they need extraordinary little sleep so that, though their days may have been filled with activities, their nights were for the greater part given over to prayer. Ordinary men and women cannot imitate them in this; but it is remarkable that even in the lower stages of contemplative prayer, once it becomes 'passive', less sleep is in fact needed; and the opinion has been advanced by spiritual writers that prayer, in such cases, takes as it were the place of sleep. As it is 'passive', reason and imagination as well as the body are at rest, and so the whole human being is refreshed, the more so as during the time of prayer the soul is close to the Source of all life and refreshment.

Here we touch on the most mysterious aspect of the time factor in the spiritual life: its relation with eternity. For the praying soul is in immediate contact with the Eternal, and the closer the union the stronger the impact of eternity on time in the human being. It is due to this impact that the soul in the higher states of the life of prayer, in full Union and Ecstasy, loses all consciousness of time, not as one absorbed in interesting work or reading—for there the loss is due to the effort of concentration, and despite it the person is always conscious of existing in time—but because it is invaded by another mode of being, by the Timeless, by Eternity. This invasion of the human soul by Eternity may perhaps offer an explanation of the extraordinary activities of some of the Saints mentioned in the beginning. When they first set out on their life of prayer they made time for God—but later God makes time for them. That does not mean that he adds more hours of sixty minutes each to their twenty-four hours' day. Time is a very mysterious

thing; sometimes it seems to 'stretch', at other times to 'contract'. The same hour of sixty minutes that seems incredibly short to the happy lover drags on interminably for the condemned criminal in his cell. And so—but this is put forward very tentatively and diffidently—God may in some mysterious way lengthen time for his servants, whose life is permeated by Eternity, so that filled with its power they are able to accomplish in an hour several times the amount of work that can normally be put into it by other persons. The more contemplative prayer becomes, the more the temporal life of the human being is invaded by Eternity, and, by a mysterious interplay, the time it has at its disposal is invested with something of the eternal quality of the Divine.

If man makes time for God, God will make time for man—ask and you shall receive. Except for rare cases progress in the spiritual life depends on a generous allowance of time set apart for God. As in human love the lover expects the beloved to give him as much time for being together as is compatible with her other duties, so God expects the loving soul to be 'together with him' in prayer as much as her circumstances allow. And, indeed, how can she desire to be together with him in Eternity, if she has not already desired to be together with him in time? Therefore Holy Scripture commands us to pray always, so that our souls may be so attuned to him in time that they will need no more preparation to be united to him for ever in the Eternal Now of the Beatific Vision.

### FROM ST AUGUSTINE

Talibus hominibus infidelibus, impiis, iniquis, quod piget dicere; sed tamen dicam, nostis enim quam verum dicam, facilius placet pantomimus<sup>1</sup> quam Deus.—*Enarr. in Ps. XXXII*—1.

Qui si forte in ipso circo aliqua ex causa expavescant, continuo se signant—*Enarr. in Ps. L*—1.

(Augustine frequently complains that the Church is deserted for the circus).

Such men—I hesitate their shame to tell—  
Yet I will speak, 'tis true, you know it well;  
Turn from the house of God, to feast their eyes  
Upon a circus clown's obscenities.  
Yet should that place be swept with panic-flare,  
Quickly they'd cross themselves, and even there  
In the Devil's house send up a frantic prayer.

JOHN SEARLE

<sup>1</sup> Not a performance but a performer. The posturing and dancing of this 'pantomimus' was often most obscene.

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT<sup>1</sup>

## A SERMON

BY

JOHN TAULER

Of how Christ, by his coming to us, produces the fear of God, goodwill, poverty, chastity, humility, purity of intention and the grace of contemplation.

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost.—Romans 15.*



NUMBERLESS, my beloved children, are the tokens of love and of the infinite goodness of God in our regard. Wherever we turn we see in all directions signs of his protection and his tenderness; so much so that, 'No one can hide himself from his heat' (Ps. 18). This immense goodness, in which no evil can have part, and which is not something added to God but his very nature and essence, this goodness, I say, what else can it desire but to love, to give Itself, to manifest Itself, to communicate and transmit Itself? All this It does as far as It can, without respite, with no respect of persons, with perfect justice. And so, there is no moment, or point of time however short, in which God does not will with all his strength to fill every reasonable soul with all good things, with all grace, all his gifts and all riches. There is no instant in which he does not desire to make his dwelling within her, to abide in her trustfully and with delight, to purify her and preserve her from all evil, to adorn her with virtues as with so many precious stones. Please God that we may be, I do not say worthy of such great benefits, poor worms as we are, but at least ready and open to receive them.

God offers himself whole-heartedly, and alas! hardly anyone deigns to notice it. He stands knocking at the door of the soul; to whomsoever will open to him, he promises to come in and to eat with him. What is this repast of Christ with the soul, except his desire to re-establish that soul as a sharer in his blessed and unutterable divinity and all the benefits flowing therefrom? He wants to rekindle that poor soul, to cradle it on his heart, to plunge it into the sleep of sweet contemplation. But alas! nearly everyone

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Sister M. Imelda, O.P.



repulses him. Christ invites us, by incessant inspirations, by interior and most loving warnings, but most men, deaf of heart, are not even aware of it. We must cast aside all vain anxieties of this world, all useless and secondary occupations; we must recollect our senses and powers interiorly; we must give up all love for exterior and perishable things so as to refer all to God, to attend to nothing but him, to be united only to him, to hear nothing but his voice in our hearts.

This is what Christ wants. He endeavours with tireless eagerness to draw us away from the things of this world, so as to bring us back to those of the heart and mind. But the more he constrains us to interior recollection, the more readily we diffuse ourselves outwardly. We despise God to attach ourselves with all our heart's love and all our mental energy to perishable things. Love of creatures reduces us to a wretched slavery, it fetters us, it completely blinds us, so that divine things leave us, I will not say merely indifferent, but altogether strangers and in absolute ignorance.

What is the reason for this? Why are there today so few spiritual and perfect men? It is because the Church has very few contemplatives. How could they, in fact, experience the things of the spirit and all that pertains to the spiritual life and to interior contemplation, they who will not, at any price, detach themselves from the pleasures of the senses and turn their hearts to God?

You have heard in the very text of this sermon how desirous the Apostle is that we should be filled by God 'with all joy and all peace in believing' (*in credendo*), so that we shall abound in hope and in the strength of the Holy Spirit. But how could we deserve such great gifts if we continue to seek and love creatures who bring us nothing but bitterness, trouble, vexation and the loss of all virtue? How could we be worthy of the power and joy of the Holy Ghost, we who remain captivated by exterior things, never entering within ourselves? True joy and true peace are to be found in God alone.

Now, God dwells in the intimate depths of our soul. Consequently there follows one of two things: either we must suffer the loss of joy and peace, or we must be interiorly recollected. There alone we shall experience the coming of Christ with the ever new gifts of his grace; there, he will strengthen us with a firm hope, steady confidence, with the very power of the spirit. This coming of Christ is never cut off, at least unless we ourselves put an obstacle in the way. And we do put an obstacle in the way every time that we voluntarily harbour in our hearts something that is contrary to his

will; we thus forfeit his grace. And though it is chiefly mortal sins that exclude grace, it is no less true that if we do not strive to avoid venial sins and attachments to sin, the coming of Christ in us will be retarded and the progress of grace greatly diminished.

Well, all that can impede our progress in grace should affect us and appear to us infinitely more harmful than the greatest evils that can befall us from exterior happenings.

For your instruction, I will now tell you in a few words what Jesus Christ usually does for man at his coming.

He comes for two reasons: firstly for his own immense Goodness which causes him to desire our well-being and secondly because of our extreme poverty and need. This is so great that we must inevitably perish were we not constantly upheld by the liberality and beneficence of God. Let us think attentively of that and we shall not be so tempted to pride; persuaded that if there is any good at all in us, we hold it entirely from him who is the source of all good and that if God withdrew his part we should be left in utter destitution.

So when Christ enters into a soul, he does such great works in him that to try to enumerate them would be impossible. We shall content ourselves with noticing a few.

(1) First of all whilst a man is actually given up to vice, when Christ comes to him and desires to visit him and purify him by his grace he begins by diffusing into his heart a great fear. He puts before his eyes the terrible judgments of God. He shows him his sins and iniquities and the eternal and terrible sufferings that he has deserved. He threatens to cast him far from his Face into exterior darkness, into the company of devils, unless he humbly repents of his faults. He draws his attention to the base ingratitude with which he has responded by an evil life to God's great benefits.

And so the whole man is seized with terror which he cannot escape except by amending his life; unless he means to persevere obstinately in wickedness. He fears indeed that the vengeance of God will suddenly come down upon his crimes and that he will not be given time to repent if he puts off his conversion. He is afraid, should God abandon him, he may become completely blinded so as no longer to be able to see the danger that his soul incurs.

(2) He has come then to goodwill. This goodwill that God excites and brings to life in him makes him resolve to submit himself freely and immediately to the Divine Majesty, to obey God's wisdom, to conform and unite himself to God's goodness, finally to bear himself respectfully and humbly before God, as all his other creatures, to carry out his will everywhere and at all times.

This goodwill is as it were the foundation of all virtue. He who has it not, cannot be good. On the contrary, he who possesses it, has also that peace with which the Apostle desires to see all of us filled; that peace of which the angels sang when they said: 'Peace to men of goodwill' (Luke 21). Indeed, whoever is endowed with this goodwill is at peace with God, with himself and with all creatures. But this goodwill is diametrically opposed to self-will: the one comes from grace, the other takes its rise in our fallen nature. The one only desires what is pleasing to God, the other objects to any authority, being unwilling to obey in anything that is not to its own taste.

Goodwill, united to the grace of God, triumphs over all malice and over all the powers of hell. And although in the struggle against the passions and the attacks of demons it will have to make efforts and suffer, yet, aided as it is by divine assistance, it takes care not to waver or fall. Then if at times it is overtaken by a fault, it is not content to lie down in the midst of vice but rises immediately, has recourse to penance as to a healing medicine and is filled again with strength and courage.

(3) When Christ by his coming has roused goodwill in the soul, before drawing it on to higher virtues, he disposes the mind to a contempt for all passing things and impels it to embrace voluntary poverty. Why is this? Because it is very difficult to enter into the way of perfection weighed down with earthly goods: Truth himself has said: 'Everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple.' (Luke 14). Earthly goods have a sort of birdlime which hinders and paralyses the mind that is not entirely dead to the world. We must therefore shake ourselves free of all these things and leave them behind.

This is what was done by the first followers of Christ; this is what innumerable Saints have done after them. Without it, it is almost impossible to attain to perfection. So this is why, as we have said, Christ entering into a soul, draws it to contempt of riches so that it can walk unencumbered in his divine footsteps. However, he forces no one. This true poverty is a counsel, not a precept. But always, those who feel themselves called by God should conform themselves and heartily follow after their extremely poor Master in the calm and gentle ways of blessed poverty; so that by despising present things they will purchase eternal goods: instead of a few contemptible realities they will receive unimaginable treasures that no thief can steal and no decay can corrupt.



No one who has not experienced it can tell the value of this contempt of such things; Christ himself has promised the hundred-fold to those who leave all for him; that means that he will reserve for them the greatest gifts of his grace and virtues and finally eternal life. But how is it that the Christian does not willingly, for the love of Christ, leave the things that he must lose eventually whether he will or no? Even so he that cannot bear to leave all should use his riches with moderation and reserve, give to the poor and take care not to hoard avariciously to his own destruction what God has made for the common use of all.

(4) After Christ has brought forth in the soul a love of poverty, he invites it to practise chastity of mind and body. Christ, Son of a Virgin and Lamb without spot, loves pure bodies and spotless souls and although we must not find fault with chaste marriages, these nevertheless distract the mind and hinder it from giving all its attention to God. Is it not a duty to seek to please the spouse and take care of temporal affairs? And so Christ, knowing all these impediments to spiritual progress and desiring that those that he calls to himself shall be free, invites them to practise chastity so that they can be entirely at the service of God, without being obliged to employ themselves with the concerns of this world but solely with the concerns of God.

Now, he who sets out to obtain and to keep chastity and integrity of body and soul is obliged to reject and repudiate all inordinate love of himself, his family, his friends, and all creatures so as to give his heart entirely and solely to Christ.

Therefore he must have no affection for the least temporal thing, but let all these attachments be given up to his Creator who is the essence of beauty and holiness, no love of fellow beings except in God and purely and holily for God. He must be determined to fly, as much as he can and for the sovereign love of God, all the allurements of the flesh, all occasions that could give rise to sensual affections, carnal love or carnal temptations. He must hate, in this world, his own soul (John 12); that is to say, the disorderly and harmful appetites of his soul, let him keep his soul for eternal life; let him have no particular or excessive familiarity with anyone (it is not rare for this to turn to hatred and what begins spiritually often ends carnally); let him not be attracted and allured by anyone under any pretext, neither out of politeness nor in return for services or presents. Let his mind be kept free from everyone and everything. Should someone love you, let him love you; one runs away from you, let him go; let nothing of that kind trouble

you. Let it suffice you to have God for your friend, God whose friendship is sincere, permanent and unshaken.

This friend of God must take care to keep his mind free from all impure and shameful images and should such present themselves, he must drive them off by thinking continually of our Saviour hanging on the cross in such agony. This image of the Crucifix he should bear stamped upon his heart, in his soul, in his flesh, on all his being so that by assiduously contemplating it with fervent prayer, he will develop a horror of anything that could tarnish the purity of his body or soul.

He should also love solitude and silence and avoid much company; let him visit sacred buildings and occupy himself in good works. He should have a horror of idleness, take up penance and although he thinks he is chaste not to fancy himself secure, but avoid occasions of sin, remembering how of old the Precursor of our Lord, in the first years of his youth, fled to the desert not relying on the sanctity of his parents nor on divine oracles.

Finally, he should be temperate and always esteem himself in his own eyes as mere nothingness.

(5) But often a spirit of vanity seizes on one who enters upon a virtuous course. Christ in coming to the soul fills it at the outset with deep humility in such a way that the soul feels itself utterly unworthy of all God's gifts, sincerely judges itself to be more wretched than all others, not daring to esteem itself as anyone's equal, attributing to itself nothing but its own sins, and subjects itself not only to God but to all creatures. This humility is the vital basis of all sanctity. Whoever obtains it is rendered, as far as is possible, capable of receiving God's gifts: God can accomplish in it all his will. Humility makes a soul gentle, kind, obliging, merciful, devoted to all and each directly any services are required. The humble and loving mind can fly anywhere at will, heaven itself is open to it. It always carries its soul in its hands and can apply it to anything. It lives always in Christ; ever bearing the living Christ within it; it follows everywhere in his footsteps, imitating his life gladly in everything. Nothing can trouble or distress the humble man, for however hard and unmerited may be his trials, he thinks himself deserving of far heavier ones.

(6) After all this, the Lord Jesus, taking possession of the soul, brings to it the flower and nosegay of all the virtues, I mean purity of intention in the things of God; that which makes it seek God's glory in and above all. Whoever has not this purity of intention does not know what charity is. Charity indeed never seeks its own interest: it seeks only God and his honour (1 Cor. 13). Intention

alone is what makes a man's life and actions pleasing or displeasing to God.

You see why it is necessary to strive in all things to tend towards God with a pure heart and a desire to praise, honour and please him. Has he not created us himself out of pure love and redeemed us by his death, when through our own fault we were perishing? He has promised us everlasting joy, not indeed for any advantage that it would bring to him, but entirely for our own benefit and our supreme happiness.

This purity of intention is the mark of one who greatly loves. For as the saying is, the eye follows the heart. Also in his coming to us Christ breathes his love into us. The greater this love and the holier our intention, the more perfect will be all the other virtues.

(7) When the soul has been thus adorned with all these virtues, it is raised by Christ to the grace of contemplation.

In two words, this is the preparation needed; the exterior life must be well ordered, always occupied with good works, beautified with good habits. Secondly the interior life must be filled with grace and divine love, without a shadow of falsehood, always straightforward and simple, fixed in God and resplendent with all virtues. The conscience must be pure, life innocent, senses temperate, nature overcome yet without always refusing it what prudence demands. Outwardly man should appear gentle, prompt to render any services expected of him. Finally and above all, he should be interiorly recollected in a holy calm far removed from forms and images. He should abandon all his possessions to the good pleasure of God, gather up all the powers of his soul in unity of spirit, praise God in continual adoration, give him thanks, love him, offer him his fealty, and serve him perseveringly with humility. On the contrary, those are unutterably unworthy of contemplation whose hearts are divided, who busy themselves curiously with the affairs of others, who are inordinately preoccupied with the necessities of life, who are slaves of their senses; those in fine who encumber themselves with all sorts of images of created things.

May the Lord Jesus grant us the grace to conduct ourselves in such a manner that he can work in us at all times and as much as he desires. Amen.



## CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*.

Sir,—In your issue of September 1947 I published an article suggesting that the new form of organisation called the 'Secular Institute' might be adapted to contemplative or semi-eremitical life in the world cannot be classified as a Secular Institute, but is rather a articles in your review, I received many private letters. I must, however, excuse myself to the writers of these for not having any practical programme for when, where and how to carry out my suggestions. They were rather in the nature of a general idea for others to build upon, from someone engaged in very different work at the tip of Africa.

I must now make an amendment. On March 12th of this year a *Motu Proprio* of the present Holy Father was issued clarifying considerably the meaning of 'Secular Institute'. Their proper characteristic is the *secular* character; and this means that the whole of normal life, only excepting what is incompatible, is to be taken up and consecrated. They are essentially apostolic, and their apostolate is not only *in the world* but *of the world*.

It is therefore clear that the suggestion of a contemplative life in the world cannot be classified as a Secular Institute, but is rather a form of *religious* life in the world but not of it, however modified a form of religious life it may be. It might, however, be possible to relate such a group of contemplatives to the Secular Life of Perfection in somewhat the same way as the enclosed nuns of the Mendicant Orders are related to the Friars.—Yours sincerely,  
Stellenbosch, 29/9/48. OSWIN MAGRATH, O.P.

## MORE CHRISTIAN CHRISTMAS CARDS

Miss Brenda Rutherford, who has done good work for C.A.G.O's drives for Christian Christmas Cards as well as for Mr Westbrook, has now her own set available. Her best work is in small silhouettes which have a great vitality; but some of her larger cards show a special liveliness in the Holy Child. This liveliness is not always matched by the animals or even by St Joseph, but perhaps that is the purpose of the drawings—that the life of the Child may stand out above all creatures. Naturally the hand-painted cards are the most attractive though they seem expensive to those who cling to pre-war standards of cost. (Write to Miss Rutherford, Chilcompton, Somerset).

C.A.G.O., too, presents its selection of Christian Christmas Cards with some new items, among which we would particularly recommend those of Margaret Burdess. Two of the latter have a very fresh style, which by means of wash and line convey the impression of some of the modern Belgian and Swiss cards, and a third makes a simple crib. A complete set of samples of these cards may be had for 4s. post free from Catholic Action Girls' Organisation, 22, Bramham Gardens, London, S.W.5.

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## REVIEWS

THE FACE OF THE SAINTS. By Wilhelm Schamoni. Translated by Anne Fremantle (Sheed & Ward; 21s.)

A BEDSIDE BOOK OF ENGLISH SAINTS AFTER 1066. By Aloysius Roche. (Burns Oates; 6s.)

Here are two books that delineate saints: Father Roche's their lives and characters, Mr Schamoni their physical appearance.

A collection of reproductions of saints' likenesses, whether authentic, probable or possible, was a good idea, and so far as this reviewer remembers it has not been done before, at any rate on this scale (120 pictures of 100 persons). Mr Schamoni's book accordingly shows traces of uncertainty in handling a new job: there is little reason to suppose that the mosaics, etc., of his earliest examples are meant to be likenesses; a few are unnecessarily obscure (e.g., Ecclesius and Maximian of Ravenna, Homobonus); to allot one saint seven pictures, when most have one, is a bit disproportionate, especially when there are some notable omissions; and we could have done with more portraits and photographs of the more recent saints and beati. On the other hand, full use is made of death-masks and other hitherto unpublished material, of which an example here and there is on the macabre or grotesque side. But the general result is a very impressive collection of human faces, of which one of the finest is surely that of St Frances Cabrini, who died in 1917 in Chicago. Some of them, e.g., St Teresa of Lisieux, should be compared with the soft caricatures that are generally current.

Father Roche writes discursively of English holy ones from the Norman conquest to the Reformation martyrs, and there is really no need to commend work already so well known and appreciated. Like its predecessors, his latest book is full of unhackneyed observations and things that need repetition. He emphasises, for example, that, calendars to the contrary notwithstanding, sanctity is not a monopoly of the clergy-house and the cloister: 'There is only one fundamental holiness, namely the holiness of the Christian'. He reminds us that 'the Church has never favoured the taking of life of any kind by ministers of religion' (*italics mine*). He says of our Reformation martyrs, 'Protestants generally might be willing enough

to extend their sympathy to these victims, did they not find themselves pulled up by the recollection that they have victims of their own, and victims, moreover, for whose fate a Catholic queen was mainly responsible. Up and down the land one comes across their monuments; and it must be conceded that the treatment meted out to them has done much to alienate the goodwill of our non-Catholic fellow countrymen'. It should hardly be necessary to state that, in spite of the title, this is not a children's book, though adolescents could profit from its careful reading.

D.A.

ST JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL. By Janet Mary Scott. (Sands; 5s.)

This little book of 112 pages contains in miniature the main facts of the life of one of the most notable founders of a great religious Order. In the beginning she is shown as an impulsive, affectionate woman, though even in early youth signs of her bias towards sanctity were not wanting. Her mother died young, but Jane, with her brother and sister, was trained by an unworldly father in the habits of obedience, self-control and compassion for the poor and suffering, which distinguished her throughout life.

She lived in the latter part of the period which saw the growth of Protestantism and her contribution towards the checking of this spiritual dis-ease was the Order which she founded under the direction of and in association with St Francis de Sales. She had, however, already shown the quality of her spirit by her generous acceptance of the spiritual mortifications which she endured after her husband's death when, with three young children, she went to live with her father-in-law, and leaving the gaiety and pleasures of a gay and pleasant world, set out along the path of suffering.

Her middle years were filled with amazing activity, for she founded no fewer than eighty convents, while for the most part she remained at Annecy and directed the affairs of the fast-growing Order. After the death of St Francis sorrows again multiplied, for one by one her first companions and friends died. Her own gallant spirit never failed, however, and she was consoled by meeting two saints, one hardly known to us today, St Peter Fourrier, and the other world-famous—St Vincent de Paul.

There are a few misprints, and by the omission of phrases on pages 36 and 67 two paragraphs are not quite clear, but the story is simply and straightforwardly told and gives a picture of a remarkable woman who became a Saint by always accepting those mortifications of the spirit which are so much more painful than those of the body, and was actually the fore-runner of St Teresa of Lisieux in teaching that 'there is a martyrdom called of love, and God sustains the life of His servants so that they may be both Confessors and Martyrs. . . '.

MARY DUNCAN.



L'ISLAM ET NOUS. Par Jean Mohammed Abd-el-Jalil, O.F.M. Collection L'Eglise et le Monde, No. 1. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars).

This booklet is the first of a series on 'L'Eglise et le Monde', and is a short, clear exposition of the main tenets and practices of Islam. It is chiefly valuable in that it throws light not only on the beliefs themselves but on their effect on Muslims' attitude to Christianity and the difficulties of securing converts among them.

The powerful emphasis on the uniqueness and unicity of Allah is the root of the chief difficulties. 'En vertu de cette conception, l'Islam officiel écarte toute possibilité—même par grace—de connaissance et de communion intimes avec Dieu.' Because of this same conception, the Christian Incarnation appears to the Muslim to be blasphemous, unthinkable.

Yet Islam has burst the rigid bounds of its own beliefs. There is a strong mystical trend in Islam known as Sufism, having its home in Persia and widespread in India; but because it has not attained official recognition it is always in danger of degeneration into a cult of the marvellous and fantastic.

Christianity has, of course, a limited recognition in Islam, for Jews and Christians are 'People of the Book' sharing a common origin with Islam. Yet it is a tainted religion in Muslim eyes and its works are vain, for Christians have not the fundamental beliefs. Muslims regard conversion to Christianity as a 'regression'; indeed they consider a cessation of all belief more reasonable than a return to an outworn and superseded religion.

A brief description of modern Islam concludes the book. The author points out that the modern ferment in Islamic countries is not simply nationalistic but has a powerful Islamic tinge. Young Islam, confronted with a decadent and dechristianised Europe, is conscious of a mission, of the need for a new Holy War. Yet modern Pan-Islamism is spiritual and cultural rather than political; it looks to Arabia not only as the cradle and centre of Islam, but as the power house from which a modernised Islam can draw its inspiration.

L. OUWERKERK.

THE TWO TREES. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 2s. 6d.)

'There is only one way of tackling human problems, great or small, with any hope of ultimate success: and that is to look at them not as though God had nothing to do with them, not apart from him, but with him, trying to see them as he sees them' (p. 26). The truth here expressed contains the secret not only of the failure of most modern attempts to deal with problems of any sort but also the secret of Fr Gerald Vann's success as a preacher and writer.

Most of us tend to try to look the other way when difficulties loom ahead and few of those who face them fairly and squarely seem to realise that God, too, looks at these things and that he has become man so that in Christ he may see them from man's point of

view and man may see them from his. In these talks, three broadcast by the B.B.C. and the fourth delivered at the Oxford University Chaplaincy, Fr Vann examines the problem of suffering as it is seen through the mind of Christ in the light of the Cross.

Gently but inexorably he makes us face the truth that all sin springs from pride and selfishness and that the explanation of the suffering which crushes the world today is to be sought in the self-centredness which in some form or other lies at the heart of the life of each one of us. 'If we put ourselves in the centre of the picture, then we make friendship impossible: other people are rivals and therefore enemies; and so we become lonely, and we fall into envy and greed and strife and all the other things that produce suffering' (p. 8). But sin recognised and suffering accepted can be turned into sorrow and sorrow into sacrifice which is the expression of that love which is so well described in the third talk. And then we are sharing in Christ's dying and therefore sharing in his healing and redeeming work since it is through his sorrow and pain that he heals and redeems. We are choosing all that is symbolised by that tree of the Cross on which Christ reversed the original act of pride and rebellion of those who ate of the seductive fruit of another tree, and which brings back life to the world because it brings back divine love.

As these talks were intended for a mixed audience the sacramental aspect is not stressed but the full richness of the theme can only be seen in terms of the Mass in which Christ's sacrifice is renewed and made present to us, and the Sacrament of penance wherein we enter into the depths of our own sinfulness and bring not only our own sins and bruises but, in a sense, those of the whole world also, to be cleansed and healed in his Precious Blood.

The prayers, liturgical in tone, which conclude each chapter are admirably adapted to express the heart's deepest feelings in the face of the sufferings and sorrows of the world today. May this little book come into the hands of the many who would find it a source of comfort and hope.

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

LA SOLUTION DU PROBLEME DE LA VIE. By F. Lelotte, S.J. (Casterman, Paris & Tournai; 110 frs.)

EGLISE ET UNITE. Various authors. (Editions Catholicité, Lille; 215 frs.)

L'EGLISE, PEUT-ELLE S'ADAPTE? Various authors. (Editions Catholicité, Lille; n.p.)

In one way or another all these books are concerned with the problem of adaptation. The first is a neat five-volume summary of Catholic doctrine, making full use of recent work in theology and adapted to the outlook of contemporary youth; the second presents a series of essays on such fundamental questions as the unity and holiness of the Church, firmly maintaining the Catholic claims but

eliminating irrelevances and expressions which are ill-justified in tradition and irritating to our contemporaries; the third demands a radically new attitude to the missions, but one which is in fact a restoration of the Pauline outlook.

This is the third edition of Fr Lelotte's book, and it is likely to run to many more. It is as near to the perfect *Summa* as we can expect in these days of hasty reading and ill-informed minds. A careful study of the text alone would leave the reader at a more advanced stage in Catholic doctrine than the vast majority of English graduates. Yet the progress is made easy through the author's constant recognition of the state of the sciences with which students are more familiar and by his readiness to make use of any source which can provide enlightenment—from St Thomas Aquinas to Baden-Powell. And if the reader should feel encouraged to go on to more serious study, there are ample bibliographies at the end of each chapter. As the books mentioned are almost all in French, the lists might not be very helpful in this country; nevertheless it is to be hoped that these comparatively slight volumes (about 60 pages each) will soon be translated: for not only are we unlikely to produce a sufficiency of English works for the bibliographies, but there also seems no reason to hope that any English author will give us so masterly and yet so simple a synthesis for many years to come.

The other two books are really complementary. *Eglise et Unité* shows how Catholic dogma allows for the widest diffusion of divine grace—notably in the essay on the *Floraison de Sainteté à travers le Monde*, 'L'Eglise qui nous propose ces modèles ne prétend pas inventer toutes les demeures du ciel'—while *L'Eglise peut-elles s'adapter?* concentrates mainly on the practical problems of preaching Christianity without imposing those European adjuncts which are at best meaningless and at worst profoundly irritating to non-European minds. We cannot even take it for granted that the Fatherhood of God will be appreciated in tribes where the father is generally a tyrant or in matriarchal societies. Yet such peoples or the civilisations in which Aristotle is a *parvenu* should not be more strange to us than the Greeks were to St Paul.

EDWARD QUINN.

L'HOMME SERA-T-IL PULVERISE? By Robert Kothern. (Warny, Louvain; n.p.)

The author begins these 'Notes Spirituelles' with a reminder of Hiroshima and the atom bomb. But he uses the incident to draw attention to the source of such a terrible disruption not in the disintegration of the atom, but in the disintegration of the individual man. This is the great problem of the day, which some are trying to tackle on the natural plane in terms of psychiatry and its like. Abbé Kothern shows that it is the supernaturalised spirit of man that alone can bring reconstruction through human integration. He traces the



principle of disintegration back to original sin, turning again to reveal the unifying principle of Redemption and Baptism, as well as the second baptism of the sacrament of penance, and thus to the integrating life of the Church in detail. He never gives himself over to abstractions, but is anchored firmly throughout his pages to the Scriptures. And indeed, though we use long, abstract words the fact of man's 'breaking up' and the need for him to become one are very simple realities. How many today are seeking vainly for a solution both to the world-wide problems of antagonised nations and men, and to their own desire to be *one* in their life, action and thought. They must realise that the solution is the same for both problems. The Kingdom of God is within you. Do you want to be 'whole'? Then seek that Kingdom. Abbé Kothén helps considerably in bringing this plain fact home to his readers; so that his book will be a source of hope to those who need it.

C.S.P.

THE IMAGE OF HIS MAKER. By Robert E. Brennan, O.P. (Mercier Press 15s.)

In this book Fr Brennan may be said to have recast the matter of his previous text-books on psychology in story-book form. The chapter headings read into each other, giving the synopsis of the marvellous history of man, born of woman, a creature of matter and spirit, living his life with the plants, sharing his senses with the animals, communing by thought with the angels, with the gift of freedom in his actions and the seeds of perfection in his powers; with a character moulded by virtue, a person sacred and inviolable, whose soul is from the hand of God, whose goal is in the bosom of God. It is the whole story from beginning to end, told in an easy, running style; the reader is carried along imperceptibly from the interesting account of man's body and its functions, through the clear and simple explanation of knowledge, love and freedom, on to the discussion of the soul and its powers, until the climax is reached and man emerges in his full stature as a person inviolable, the crown of visible creation, reflecting most perfectly of all creatures the image of his Maker and destined to be united with God for all eternity by knowledge and love.

In his introduction the author says he is writing chiefly for younger readers, presumably of high-school age, but his book will provide a very readable account of human nature for average readers of all ages. The last three chapters on personality and the nature, origin and goal of the human soul are excellent spiritual reading.

E.C.

SECULAR AND SACRED. By Philip Arthur Micklem. (Hodder & Stoughton; 10s. 6d.)

Dr Micklem in these Bampton Lectures for 1946 gives us a study in Theology, 'in its application to human history and human society'. He is concerned with 'the two realms of the Secular and the Sacred

in their mutual impacts and relationships, more particularly within a Christian context'. The goal of his enquiry into the principles of a Christian Civilisation' is that 'right order as constituted by the co-ordination of the two realms within an organic unity'. 'The truth', he writes, 'for which the Incarnation stands, is not only the fundamental dogma of religion; it is the fundamental postulate of a Christian Sociology', and consequently 'the ultimate resolution of the tension between the two realms is to be found in the Person of Christ'.

This theme Dr Micklem traces through the history of Western Christendom, showing the merits and demerits of the medieval synthesis of the 'Secular and Sacred'; the disruption of that synthesis during the renaissance period and the rise of the modern secularistic age with its unhappy fruits in the life both of society and individuals. We are thus led to the conclusion of the last two lectures, that the tension between the two realms can only be resolved by a Christianity which is organised, purified, independent and dedicated to the task of christianising the secular in the whole range of its activities.

It is a high and serious theme which Dr Micklem expounds with deep sincerity and a general orthodoxy which will commend itself to Catholic readers. The problem of the relationship of the Secular and Sacred is not merely perennial and fundamental; it is for our contemporary world actual in the highest degree. It is the social and political categories of human life that need bringing under the influence of the Gospel and of Christ. The author of these lectures recognises and appraises the greatness of the medieval achievement, but he is clear that any attempt at imitation or reproduction would be vain. The method of 'external legalistic ascendancy' if it were possible would defeat itself; that of 'assimilative influence exercised from within' is the only effective method.

Commenting on the words of an earlier Bampton Lecturer, he says 'what is most significant in the medieval idea is that it sought fulfilment rather in world acceptance than in world renunciation. As its main aim and direction it looked not to a mystical flight from the world, but to the conquest of the world for Christ, the stamping of all life from the centre to the circumference with the mark of the Sacred'.

We may add that a modern Christian Culture can only arise out of the solution of a number of 'agonising problems'. The divisions in religious beliefs, the multiform problems of the Mass in economic organisation, and methods of production are types of problems which the middle ages never knew but which challenge us today. How the divisions in religious belief will be healed, when, or in what measure, is hidden from the human mind, but is it foolish to suggest that a first and essential step would be to create a universal awareness of these divisions and a universal will for unity, in that Church which others call Roman, but which calls itself in addition One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic?

The problem of the Mass calls for courage and adaptability in accepting the modern world and its techniques in organisation, economics and production. What we take over from the past is the imperishable core of doctrinal truth, but new adaptations to the ever changing material field are necessary if we are to create the living Christian Culture. The chances in any event of constructing an archaistic simulacrum of a bygone age are nil. In particular the applications of the doctrine of private property to modern conditions call for a creative moral and intellectual effort which cannot be wholly painless. A beginning has been made by Maritain and others, but much still remains to be done. In this connection we would support Dr Micklem's contention that the extension of State Competence and Control is not necessarily a 'threat to the values for which the Church stands'; though we may add that the problem precisely consists in reconciling the demands of a mass society with the eternal needs of human freedom.

There are numerous and substantial points of agreement between the present work and Maritain's 'Humanisme Intégral', with which it will no doubt invite comparison. It is perhaps inevitable that Dr Micklem's historical approach to the problem of the Sacred and the Secular should lack something of the range, depth and fire of the earlier French work; but it is also likely that his treatment of the subject will prove more acceptable to English readers.

R. VELARDE.

WILLIAM LAW: A Study in Literary Craftsmanship. By Henri Talon. (Rockliff; 8s. 6d.)

Quite possibly many friends of the mystical and Christian writings will be put off by the sub-title of this extraordinarily concentrated study of William Law. They must be re-assured. Although it is a study of Law's prose style, which was so often almost a lyrical style, Dr Talon is so concerned not to 'dissociate the subject matter from the expression', that what he presents is very much more than a mere unfolding of Law's mystical beliefs 'so far as was absolutely necessary for an appreciation of his talent as a writer'.

He introduces us to the complete Law: that is, Law the Tantivy Tory wit, Law the moralist, Law the speculative and ascetical theologian, and, alas, Law the rigorist. It is exceedingly salutary to find at last a study of this remarkable man in his entire person. Just as St Teresa, the Eagle, was a shrewd business-like woman as well as a mountaineer among the spiritual peaks, so Law was a remorseless logician—though he despised the discursive reason—and threw his 'ifs' with devastating effect among the latitudinarian Whig rationalists of his time. By setting off Law's austere figure against his environment in church and society Dr Talon has performed a considerably useful service.

Rigorism was the mark of Law's work; how it affected his style



and his manner of persuasion is one of the chief tasks Dr Talon has set himself. His answers are illuminating. He shows the limitations of Law's art of persuasion, the chief of which arose out of his imperfect understanding of 'fleshly man'. Law failed in turning the spiritually feckless from the town of Morality let alone Vanity Fair; but at the same time he aroused men like Dr Johnson and the Wesleys. If he was a rigorist among rigorists, if he struck at the stage to destroy, as his fellow non-juror, Collier, struck at Dryden's towering crest to reform, it remains that one must not easily dismiss his rigorism.

His opponents, writes Dr Talon, might have 'quoted with great effect the authority of many saints and theologians, above all of St Thomas Aquinas . . . at the cost of some slight misrepresentation of his thought'. That is the rub. The lax should beware of casuistry just as rigorists should mortify themselves with as much of it as they can stomach. Nevertheless it is the glory of men such as Law and Pascal (whose name cannot be avoided in this context), and to a lesser extent, Bossuët, that they did battle against *le divertissement*. Their God was a consuming fire. Their understanding of pastimes was expressed in Barclay's Apology: 'we should "pass the time of our sojourning in fear"'. But always it is to be remembered that Law is in the lists against men like Horace Walpole. Does he speak to their condition? If he does not, it is not for want of liveliness of style and felicity of expression. His candid portraits of worldly, mammonish and rather decent folk in his *Christian Perfection* must without doubt have been instantly recognised by those men for whom we may feel a certain sympathy in their dislike of 'being righteous overmuch'.

In one or two places Dr Talon writes of Law's 'becoming a mystic'. Am I crabbed in disliking such a description of Law's growing awareness of the fact that he was 'born between two books'? 'Becoming a mystic' is rather like 'going in for mysticism' or 'taking up religion'. But it seems that Law did reach a certain stage in his life when he profoundly realised the limits of moralising and of witty dissertation with the 'uninclined' (his own deliberately chosen word). He had read Malebranche and Descartes. He was, like the Quakers with whom he later came to friendship, a Behmenist, like Barclay a Cartesian. But at the back of them all stand St Bonaventure, Hugo of St Victor and the mystical writers of the 11th and 12th centuries. His interest in vegetable life, even mineral (I am at once reminded of Vaughan, Silex Scintillans, in this connexion) is decidedly Bonaventuran. We may say of Law as M. Gilson says of the Seraphic Doctor that 'the world appeared to him as a system of transparent symbols giving rise in the devout soul to the thought of the Creator'. How that informs his 'style of love' with its rhythms and imagery we learn among these pages. Underneath the style is something of the silent music of the unceasing murmur of the world. It is meet that Law died singing.

His writings would have especially appealed to publishers in his day if it had suffered from our paper shortage, for they were void of padding. I do not know whether Dr Talon has been impressed both by Law and the paper shortage, but it is probable that he would have liked to expand what he has so ably confined. As an 'evangelical' of sorts rather than a 'mystical' fellow your reviewer would have wished far more space had been devoted to Law's interpretation of the Inner Light in relation to his understanding of the Atonement. As a not altogether recent admirer of Coleridge, I should have liked to read more of Law's influence over that important man. It would help to take us up to T. S. Eliot, the late Charles Williams and Brother George Every. You can throw in Aldous Huxley if you have a mind.

H. M. EDWARDS.

THE WORSHIP OF THE ENGLISH PURITANS. By Horton Davies. (Dacre Press; 25s.)

This book written by the Professor of Divinity in Rhodes College, Grahamstown, is a careful and exhaustive sketch of the origin and history of those religious bodies which broke away from the Anglican Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The name Puritan was given to all such, though there arose a sharp cleavage between the Presbyterians who followed their founder Calvin more closely, and the Independents or Congregationalists who looked for, and found, a further Reformation through the Spirit. In particular they disliked credal formulas and fixed forms of prayer. In several respects the Puritans as a whole deviated from Calvin, who desired weekly Communion, tolerated the idea of Episcopacy, used the Apostles' Creed, and approved of Confirmation and Confession. But they were true to him in rejecting vestments of any kind, or ceremonies which were not directly prescribed in Scripture, and in making the Bible the fundamental rule not only of doctrine but of worship. For this reason they rejected the Book of Common Prayer even in its 1552 form which Calvin himself was prepared to tolerate, in spite of 'its many tolerable ineptitudes', as he termed them.

In spite of their differences both Presbyterians and Independents accepted the *Directory for Public Worship* set forth by the Westminster Assembly and given Parliamentary sanction in 1644, thereby replacing the Book of Common Prayer. It is fully (though occasionally inaccurately) described by Mr Davies. Being a compromise effected between those who desired a fixed liturgy and those who did not, it is rather a manual of direction than a service book. Great emphasis is laid on the sermon. The Lord's 'Supper' includes the recitation of the words of Institution and a prayer for the sanctification of the elements of bread and wine: 'that we may receive by Faith the Body and the Blood of Christ'. But the worshippers are directed to sit at or around the Table. The Puritan objections to the Prayer Book are well known, especially to the Sign of the Cross in



Baptism, and the ring in marriage. It is perhaps less well known that the Directory forbids any service at funerals.

A full account of the negotiations with Charles II and the Anglican bishops is given, and it is pointed out that Baxter's proposed liturgy contained both an anamnesis and an explicit Epiclesis: 'Sanctify these thy creatures of Bread and Wine . . . that they may be sacramentally the Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ'. It is a pity that the Bishops failed to incorporate this in the book of 1662.

The author lays stress on the spirituality of the Puritans and their general dislike of the formalism which a set liturgy and still more the reading of homilies tended to produce. For the understanding of English non-conformity up to the present day this book is quite invaluable.

E. SYMONDS.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

*Bloomsbury Publishing Company.* Sister Mary Ansgar, O.P.: First Communion Souvenirs, 2s. 6d.; A Christmas Painting Book, 2s. 6d.

*Bruce Humphries.* Terence L. Connolly, S.J.: Alice Meynell, Centenary Tribute, \$2.25.

*Burns, Oates and Washbourne.* Knox's New Testament, 12s. 6d.; Vera Barclay: The Way into the Kingdom, 3s. 0d.; Mary G. Dewar: Holy Days, 6s. 0d.; David L. Greenstock: Christopher's Talks to the Little Ones, n.p.; Paul de Jaegher, S.J.: The Lord is my Joy, 7s. 6d.; François Mauriac: Margaret of Cortona, 9s. 6d.

*Casterman.* Jacques Leclercq: Saint François de Sales, 66fr.

*Editions Sapience.* S. Bezzine, O.P.: Mystique de Saint Catherine de Sienne, 150fr.

*Oxford University Press.* Edgar J. Goodspeed: How to Read the Bible, 7s. 6d.

*Seuil.* Jean Danielou: Le Mystere de l'Avent, n.p.

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